



Assessment Practice Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

Assessment Practice is divided into the following sections:

- Background and Contexts
- Section 1 – General Principles of Assessment
- Section 2 – Setting Summative Assessment
- Section 3 – Marking and Internal Moderation
- Section 4 – External Moderation

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTS

1. Assessment Practice supports the College's Assessment Policy and its three annexes: Assessment Regulations, Grade Criteria, and Grade Marking Criteria.
2. The four sections of Assessment Practice set out the operational processes for assessment setting and delivery, and the staff roles and responsibilities defined by the College, to ensure that students are assessed in a fair and effective way and that consistent standards are maintained.
3. All staff involved in the assessment process must take full account of the operational principles, definitions and processes contained in Assessment Practice. This will help to ensure that the necessary level of equity and transparency of assessment is evident to students and that their learning is assessed in ways which reflect, and are aligned with, the teaching and learning support provided through the courses they are studying.
4. All summative assessment processes must comply with the relevant provisions of Assessment Practice which thus applies to both coursework and examination assessments. More detailed procedures for exam setting and the management of exam events are contained in a separate Examinations Administration document.

SECTION 1 – GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

5. This section clarifies some of the fundamental principles of assessment which underpin Assessment Practice. Staff requiring specific guidance on the educational principles underpinning effective assessment should seek support from the relevant Head of Faculty.
6. The College embeds the provision of formative assessment for students in its overall Teaching and Learning Strategy.
7. However, Assessment Practice focuses specifically on summative assessment because of the crucial place of summative assessment in award-bearing courses and the maintenance of standards.

PRINCIPLES

8. These principles apply to all HE credit and award-bearing taught courses.
9. All summative assessments must be:
 - Clearly documented
 - Published to students in advance in an appropriate form and medium
 - Transparent in intention and clearly linked to the approved assessment strategy of the course
 - Designed to reflect the awarding body's regulatory framework, to test students' performance against the agreed learning outcomes for the course, and structured to align with the teaching and learning strategy for the course
 - Designed and executed in a fair and equitable form
 - Designed in such a way as to ensure appropriate security of assessment
10. The Course Leader is responsible for the quality, design and delivery of the assessment of the course.
11. All summative assessment elements (including assessment briefs) must be peer reviewed internally, include Assessment Criteria, and where appropriate, a Marking Scheme. The Peer Reviewer must have appropriate academic knowledge and experience.
12. All assessment elements must be designed and administered internally to ensure that appropriate provision is made for students with disabilities.

SECTION 2 – SETTING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

DEFINITIONS

Assessment Criteria

Based on the intended learning outcomes for the work being assessed, these set out the knowledge and understanding, subject-specific, and transferable skills that markers expect a student to display in the assessment task, and that are taken into account in marking the work. Assessment criteria should be student-friendly and assessment-specific expressions of the achievements suggested by the learning outcomes.

Generic Grading and Classification Criteria

These are set out in Annex 2 of the Assessment Policy with an accompanying explanation of their purpose and the expectations of their use. They provide a common matrix of statements describing the characteristics of student attainment across the levels and the full range of marks. They provide a common language for assessment judgments for those marking student work, and a carefully graded and integrated set of descriptors to inform assessment design and marking schemes for assessors and students.

Marking Scheme

A detailed breakdown of how grades or marks for the assessment are allocated to specified components, assessment criteria and/or model answer. To be used where appropriate.

Peer Reviewer

An internal reviewer, responsible for the Peer Review of assessment elements.

Formative Assessment

Assessment used as a means of giving students feedback on their achievement to date. Marks or grades given for formative assessment do not contribute to the overall mark for a course, level or award.

Summative Assessment

Assessment derived from the learning outcomes for the course and used to establish what a student has achieved. Marks or grades given for summative assessment contribute to the overall mark for a course, level and award, as specified.

Written Examinations

Written examinations usually occur at the end of a period of learning. They may be 'seen', where the student is aware in advance of the questions(s) they are expected to answer, or 'unseen', where the questions are only revealed in the examination session. In an open book examination, a student is permitted to use reference materials during the assessment. The questions asked as part of a written exam may be essay, short answer, problem or multiple choice. Written examinations usually (but not always) take place under timed conditions (HESA definition).

Oral Examinations

An oral examination usually occurs at the end of a period of learning. Like a written examination, it may take a number of forms and permit students to use a variety of materials.

Practical Examinations

Practical examinations cover oral assessments and presentations and practical skills assessment, focusing on whether, and/or how well, a student performs a specific skill, technique or competency (HESA definition).

Coursework

Coursework covers written assignments (including essays, reports, dissertations, portfolios) and assignments in other media, including art portfolios and project outputs (HESA definition).

Problem Sets and Other Exercises

Set exercises, such as in-class tests or take-home problem sets, are tasks designed to assess the application of knowledge, analytical, problem-solving or evaluative skills. Examples may include data interpretation, data analysis and problem-based or problem-solving exercises. The categorisation of set exercises will depend on the nature of the exercise being set. Typically, set exercises will be coursework or practical examinations. Where the set exercise is performed under examination conditions, it should be treated as a written or practical examination. (HESA definition with additions.)

COLLEGE ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

13. Each coursework assessment should have an Assessment Brief, using the NCH template, which sets out the specific assessment task, the assessment criteria, and other details including the issue date and hand-in and planned feedback dates. Course Leaders should make all such briefs available to students by the start of the relevant academic year via the College VLE.

SETTING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

14. An Assessment Brief, Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme (where appropriate) must be provided for each summative coursework assessment element including referral assessments.
15. Assessment Criteria and a Marking Scheme (where appropriate) must be provided for each summative examination.
16. The Course Leader and internal Peer Reviewer should take full account of the College generic grading and classification criteria to ensure that the expected student attainment against the course learning outcomes is set at the right level. These should be written to allow students the potential to demonstrate achievement across the whole marking range, and to explain to students what they should expect from the assessment and the consequent feedback.

INTERNAL PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENTS

17. For coursework assessments, the Course Leader is responsible for confirming the assessment components listed on the Assessment Brief Peer Review, Appendix 1, before details of the assessment are passed to the Internal Peer Reviewer. Examinations questions must also be peer reviewed. The Head of Faculty will appoint the Peer Reviewer, based on a judgment that the Peer Reviewer has suitable experience to undertake the review.
18. The Peer Reviewer must check that:
 - i. The examination questions, or completed assessment briefing sheet, conform with the assessment strategy, assessment description, or referral description in the current, validated course descriptor;
 - ii. The instructions and/or questions are clearly worded so that students can reasonably be expected to understand them and know what they are expected to do, in the context of the way in which the teaching of the course content has been covered;
 - iii. The Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme (if appropriate) are aligned to the task and the intended learning outcomes for the course, and comply with the College's Generic Grading Criteria.

19. The internal Peer Reviewer must complete the record sheet identifying any issues for resolution and the response required from the Course Leader.
20. The Course Leader must take appropriate action in response to the Peer Reviewer's comments.
21. When the Peer Reviewer and Course Leader are satisfied that the assessment is appropriate to distribute to students, they must sign and date the record sheet. If agreement cannot be reached, a second Peer Reviewer must be consulted, appointed by the Head of Faculty. The second Peer Reviewer will determine the outcome of review.

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENTS

22. After internal peer review, the Head of Faculty sends assessment briefs to the SSU Link Tutor. Once the Link Tutor has approved, the Head of Faculty will send a copy of the assessment brief, and the associated documentation showing Peer Reviewer and Link Tutor approval, to the External Examiner. Both the Link Tutor and External Examiner are expected to provide advice and feedback on the form and content of all proposed assessments, including written and practical examinations and coursework, before they are given to students.

EXEMPTIONS FROM GRADE MARKING

23. All courses must be summatively assessed and will normally be marked using the Grade Marking scale. Applications for exemptions will be requested via the modifications process.

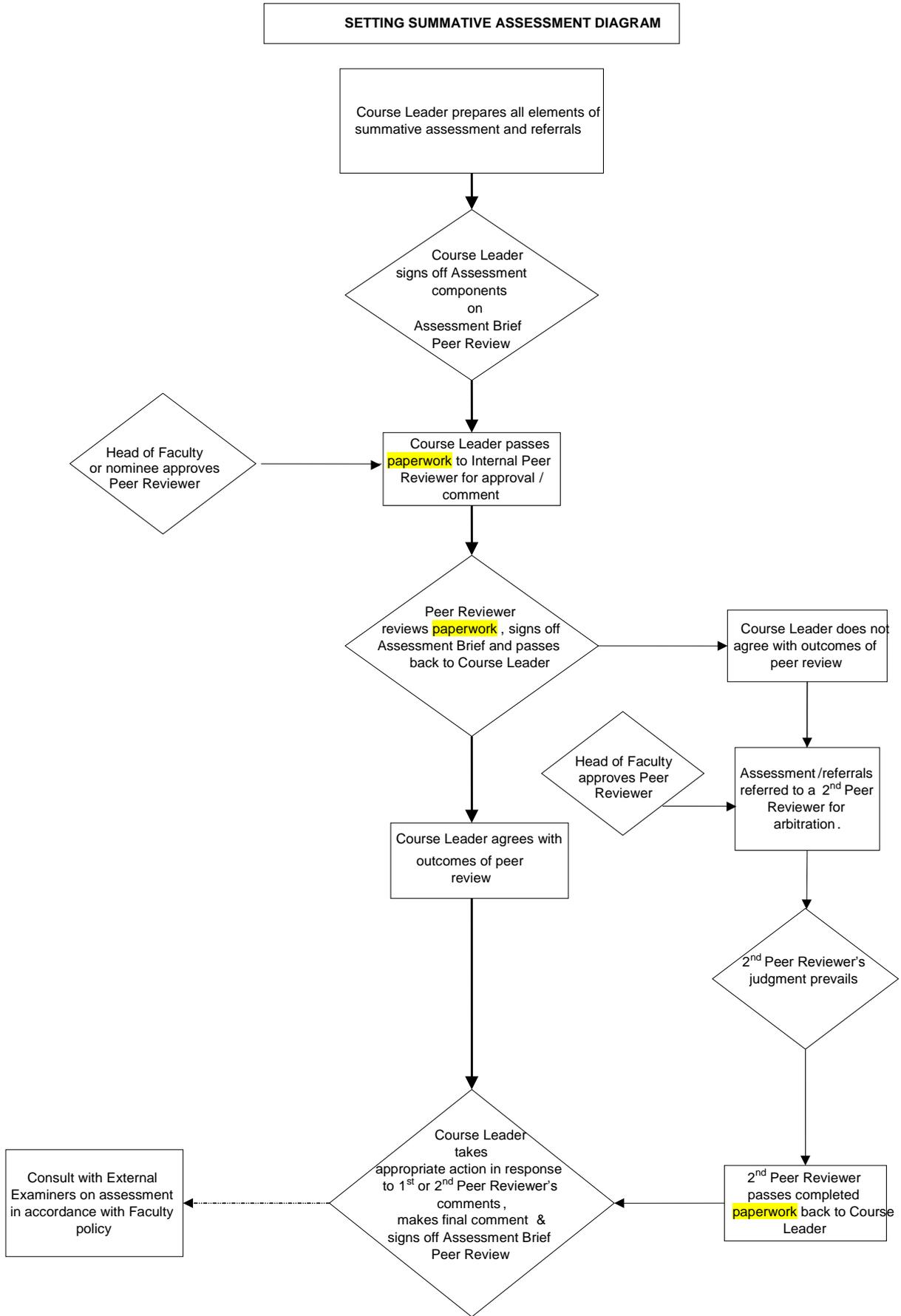
COLLEGE EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

24. Any assessment element that meets **all** of the following criteria must be administered through the formal College examination procedures managed by the Student Support Office:
 - Designated as an examination in the course descriptor
 - The assessment is an individual endeavour and a one-off event
 - The assessment is of a fixed time duration (e.g. must be completed in a specified two-hour period)
 - The assessment requires the provision of an examination venue
 - Students are required to stay in a particular venue for the duration of the assessment event or until they have completed their work
25. Inclusion in managed faculty examination procedures will ensure:
 - The allocation of rooming and inclusion in a published timetable of events;
 - Provision of alternative venue and other appropriate facilities for students with disabilities;
 - Invigilation and other staffing for events;
 - Notification to students of arrangements as necessary;
 - Security of assessment.

26. Class tests may be conducted in timetabled class sessions, provided the existing booked room is a suitable venue for the test in question. However, they must comply with the General Principles of Assessment contained in Section 1 and the approval process set out in Section 2, and where this type of assessment is administered to more than one group of students, appropriate arrangements must be made to ensure the security of the assessment.
27. Examinations marked live (e.g. oral examinations, performances, and presentations) must also comply with the General Principles of Assessment and the approval process set out in Section 2. A sample of performance-based assessments must be recorded for the purposes of external review. Clear arrangements for marking must also be agreed, documented and published, and the necessary staff allocated, in accordance with the College marking requirements set out in Section 3 of this document.

GROUP WORK ASSESSMENT

28. Group work assessment is an important learning tool but has inherent challenges. The Assessment Brief for group work assessment should clarify whether students are given individual marks or a group mark, and the marking criteria should make it clear whether the final output, or the group work leading to it, or both, is being assessed.
29. The Assessment Brief should outline how marks will be allocated if there are disagreements within the group, or if the assessment cannot be completed by the group.



SECTION 3 – MARKING AND INTERNAL MODERATION

DEFINITIONS

Anonymous Marking

Where the identity of students is concealed during the marking process.

Double Marking

Two markers mark the students' work 'blind' i.e. without sight of the other assessor's mark. Each records a mark and a justificatory comment. Marks and comments should be written on separate sheets and not disclosed until the markers meet to discuss their marks. Through this discussion, markers will determine an agreed mark which should be recorded on the students' work. Details of this discussion must be recorded. All three marks are recorded so the documentary record is full and transparent.

Moderation

A process intended to ensure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable, that the Assessment Criteria have been applied consistently, and that feedback to students is appropriate and consistently provided.

Sampling

A sample of student work is reviewed for either the purpose of moderation, or double marking.

Generic Grading and Classification Criteria

These are set out in Annex 2 of the Assessment Policy with an accompanying explanation of their purpose and the expectations of their use. They provide a common matrix of statements describing the characteristics of student attainment across the levels and the full range of marks. They provide a common language for assessment judgments for those marking and moderating student work, and a carefully graded and integrated set of descriptors to inform marking schemes and feedback on assessed work for assessors and students.

Marking Scheme

A detailed breakdown of how marks for the assessment are allocated to specified components or criteria, possibly including a model answer.

Mark Sheet

A list of all students eligible to take the assessment/course and the agreed grades or marks awarded, and including first and second markers' grades or marks, where second marking has taken place.

MARKING PRINCIPLES

30. The marking and recording of student results should be consistent, fair, accurate, equitable, reliable, and transparent, and an audit trail must be maintained.
31. Anonymous marking will be employed in accordance with College policy and procedures.

32. Heads of Faculty or their nominees will assign markers and internal moderators to all summative assessments, indicating instances where double marking is applicable.
33. New members of academic staff involved in the summative assessment of student work should receive a copy of the Assessment Policy, its annexes and this Assessment Practice Guidance, along with all course information (descriptors, briefs, Assessment Criteria and Marking Schemes).
34. Moderation and double marking must be carried out by a Moderator with appropriate academic knowledge and experience.
35. In accordance with the College's Assessment Policy, students must be provided with feedback opportunities for all assessments. Where necessary (e.g. written examinations), this feedback can be generic and should be accessible to all students via the College's VLE who have taken the assessment. Students should be told when and in what form they will receive feedback.
36. In accordance with College policy on feedback, students can expect to receive feedback on all summative coursework within **20 working days** of the submission date, when submitted by the submission date. The 20-working day deadline does not apply to work submitted late.
37. Coursework, presentation, and other practical assessment marks may be returned to students provided the student is aware that these marks need to be ratified by the Course Assessment Board and so might change.

MARKING PRACTICES

38. All assessment elements must be marked as a grade and entered on the Mark Sheet in accordance with the Marking Scheme. Full account should be taken of the College generic grading and classification criteria to help ensure accurate and consistent marking of assessments by markers and moderators.
39. Internal moderation must be carried out on a sample of all marked work for all summative assessments **excluding** work that has been double marked. The Course Leader must ensure that samples of work from **all** markers involved in assessing a course are moderated. The records with the mark sheets are kept centrally within the College.

DOUBLE MARKING

40. Double Marking of assessment elements must take place at Level 6 for any assessment which constitutes 60% or more of the weighting of a course mark.
41. For Double Marking, both markers must independently assess the work according to the defined Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme (where appropriate). The work and marks awarded should be discussed so that they can arrive at an agreed mark and enter it on the mark sheet.
42. If a mark cannot be agreed, an internal third marker will determine the final agreed mark.
43. The marks and comments of all internal markers, and the final agreed mark, must be kept for reference by the Course Leader and submitted to the External Examiner where such work forms part of the External Examiner sample.

44. Performance-based assessments (e.g. presentations) should normally be marked and double marked at the time of the performance. When this is not possible, the first marker should make arrangements for the assessment to be recorded. In any case, a sample of performance-based assessment should be recorded for the purposes of external review. Where opportunities for effective double marking/moderation are limited, the weighting given to this form of assessment should be carefully considered.
45. Assessment that has been double marked will not be subject to internal moderation.

INTERNAL MODERATION

46. For internal moderation purposes, the size of the sample of work submitted for each summative assessment will be a minimum of 10% or at least five pieces of work – whichever is the greater figure.
47. The moderation sample must be properly representative and include borderline cases between each band of award classification (including pass/fail) and an example of a first-class piece of work and a clear Fail, if applicable.
48. A sample of a staff member's marking for all elements must be moderated by the Head of Faculty prior to the return of the marked work to the students and, in that staff member's first academic year at the College, the sample should correspond to at least twice that required for internal moderation.
49. At the conclusion of the internal moderation process, the internal moderator should indicate, on the Internal Moderation Record for each piece of work included in the sample, that they have read the work and that the range of marks awarded in the sample are confirmed. They should also note any necessary action points relating to fairness and reliability of the assessment outcome, consistent application of the Assessment Criteria, and appropriateness and consistency of feedback to students. The moderator should sign this statement.
50. Internal moderators are not required to produce comments on individual pieces of student work.
51. The internal moderator's comments regarding the sample of work selected must be retained by the Student Support Office for reference and submitted to the External Examiner.
52. Where an internal moderator identifies a discrepancy in marking (i.e. with an individual mark, a sub-set of the sample, or the entire sample), consultation with the marker must consider the impact of this on the entire cohort. This may require review of a wider sample of work. If agreement can be reached, the marks should be adjusted accordingly and a written record of the process made.
53. If agreement cannot be reached, the sample must be referred to a second internal moderator. The second moderator may arbitrate on the marks, scrutinising a wider sample if necessary. The judgment of the second moderator will prevail.
54. Where there is a wider issue over the soundness of assessment and/or substantial queries raised concerning the consistency of marking, leading to the

re-marking of the assessment for the whole cohort, the Master must be informed. The Master will consult with the Registrar and the External Examiner(s) to agree any actions necessary before the Course Assessment Board.

EXTERNAL MODERATION

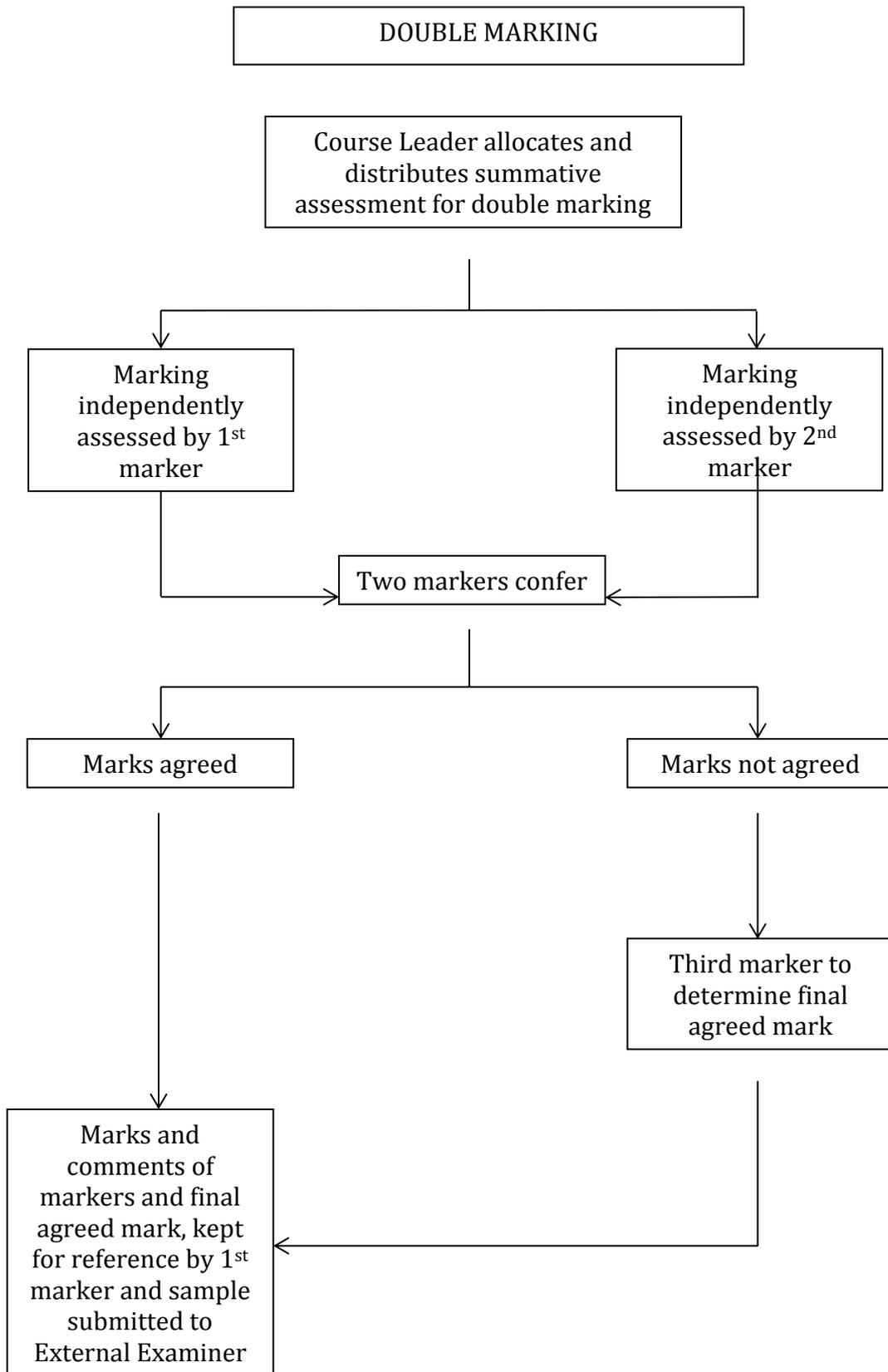
See Section 4 relating to External Examiners.

RETENTION OF ASSESSED MATERIAL

55. The requirements for the retention of assessed material are set out the NCH Retention Policy.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

56. Arrangements for additional support will have been put in place as advised by the Student Support Office. No further allowances will be made at the time of marking, except as detailed in the procedures outlined in 'Dyslexia or Pre-Lingual Deafness: Information for Academic Staff'. Extenuating circumstances claims will be processed in the normal way, precluding the incidence of double compensation.



SECTION 4 – EXTERNAL MODERATION

DEFINITIONS

Moderation

A process intended to ensure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that the Assessment Criteria have been applied consistently, and that feedback to students is appropriate and consistently provided.

PRINCIPLES

57. External Examiners are asked to moderate the marking of internal markers to ensure that marking is accurate, consistent, fair, equitable, reliable, transparent and in line with national standards for the provision.
58. External Examiners are not expected to mark work themselves.
59. External Examiners must not be asked to arbitrate or moderate disagreements between internal markers/moderators, or be used as a third marker. Any disagreements must be resolved between the marker, Peer Reviewer and Moderator.
60. Internal Moderation Record Sheets, Appendix 2, including comments, must be submitted by each marker/moderator to the Student Support Coordinator, and be available to the External Examiner(s) in respect of the sample.
61. In order to carry out the role effectively, External Examiners must have available to them:
 - A representative sample¹ of marked student work for all summative assessments;
 - A sample of any recorded performance-based assessments for the purposes of external review;
 - The course descriptor, relevant assessment brief(s), assessment criteria and marking schemes (where appropriate) for each assessment element;
 - A copy of the Internal Moderation Record clearly showing the mark/grade for each piece of work and any comments of the internal moderator;
 - Completed mark sheets with the moderation sample highlighted for ease of reference, a copy of which must be kept by the Student Support Coordinator for reference and audit purposes.
62. Where the external moderation of assessment raises substantial queries concerning the standards or consistency of marking, the External Examiner has the right to recommend to the Course Assessment Board a change to element marks and where appropriate course marks.
63. The External Examiner(s) cannot recommend that any individual mark be changed in isolation, unless the work of every student for that assessment has been reviewed, to ensure that no student is unfairly advantaged/disadvantaged.

¹ At minimum, the sample should correspond with that required for internal moderation



APPENDIX 1 – ASSESSMENT BRIEF PEER REVIEW

Course Title:

Course Code:

Level:

Course Leader:

Internal Peer Reviewer:

Assessment Number and Title:

Weighting % _____ Pass Grade/Mark% _____ Must
Pass/Aggregated

Assessment Components	Confirmed by Course Leader	Peer Reviewer Comments
Assessment Practice Guidance used		
Complies with assessment strategy and assessment descriptor		
Instructions are clear		
Assessment criteria are clear and appropriate to task and level, and align with the NCH generic grading criteria		
Task enables students to achieve course learning outcomes		
Consideration of special provision arrangements for students with disabilities		

Signed Internal Peer Reviewer:

Date:

Course Leader Comments	
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Signed Course Leader:

Date:

			Services
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